

**CITY OF GAHANNA  
PARKS & RECREATION BOARD  
MINUTES – October 7, 2015**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Eric Miller, Chair called the meeting of the Parks & Recreation Board to order on Wednesday, October 7, 2015, at 7:03pm at Gahanna City Hall.

**ROLL CALL**

**Present:**

Cynthia Franzmann  
Luke Messinger  
Eric Miller  
Andy Piccolantonio  
Vincent Tremante

**Absent:**

Jan Ross  
Jill Schuler

In attendance from the City Administration was Troy Euton, Director, and Mike Musser, Deputy Director, Department of Parks & Recreation.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Messinger made a **MOTION** to approve the minutes from the August 12, 2015 meeting; seconded by Piccolantonio. **On roll call vote:** Franzmann, yes, Messinger, yes, Miller, yes, Piccolantonio, yes, and Tremante, yes. **Motion carried 5 – 0.**

**ADDITIONS/CORRECTIONS TO THE AGENDA**

Miller stated that in the future, any committees that do not have anything to report will have “No report” or “No report; did not meet” noted on the agenda.

**HEARING OF VISITORS**

Dave Wharton, to be covered in New Business.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**New Albany Park District**

Prior to the meeting, Piccolantonio reached out to Dave Wharton of the New Albany and Plain Township Department of Parks & Recreation, and he agreed to visit and discuss his experience with a parks district and how it differs from a city department.

Wharton noted that in 2000, when New Albany was a village of only about 4,000 people, the Parks and Recreation department was virtually non-existent. The village explored the option of adopting a parks district model so that the tax burden could be spread over a larger number of people (population of about 18,000). In addition, they wanted students who went to school together to play together in the same parks.

In order to form the “recreation district”, the school, village, and township signed an agreement to make the district a taxing authority. As a taxing authority, the district can put a ballot issue out for an operating levy, can create a bond issue, and can request a property assessment tax from tax payers. In addition, the three entities formed a Board to oversee the district, with two representatives from each entity (school board, city council, and township trustees) making up the Board.

Funded by a permanent operating levy and two bonds (and receiving no funding from the city/village), New Albany Parks and Recreation manages three park properties (with a total of 200 acres). They do not manage the pool or neighborhood parks, and they use a contractor to handle the mowing. With a staff of only four full-time employees, Wharton made a point to only take on projects he knew could be successful.

Piccolantonio pointed out that in city districts like Gahanna, citizens usually go straight to city council when they have a complaint. With a parks district, citizens would be more likely to go to the parks department with their complaints instead.

Miller asked Wharton what the benefits to Gahanna would be if they transitioned to a parks district like New Albany. Wharton explained that with a parks district, he could get projects moving a lot faster. In addition, he believed that there was more accountability, since the tax payers approve the projects and funding directly with their votes.

Wharton explained that the transition to a functional parks district took place over several years, and when asked if Gahanna could possibly do it in one year, he replied that he didn't believe it would be possible.

Tremante inquired about whether or not citizens' city taxes would go down if the Parks & Recreation department were no longer funded by the city. Wharton explained that the city would no longer need to seek additional funding for Parks & Recreation, and there would be no need to raise property or income taxes, since they would have a \$3 million bump in income with the departure of the Parks & Recreation department. That extra money could be spread to other departments such as streets.

Euton stated that the success of a Gahanna parks district would depend on the property taxes of the school district. At a previous meeting, Schuler stated that the school district could only raise \$2 million from the district property taxes. This would not be enough to fund the Gahanna Parks & Recreation department as it currently operates.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **BWT – Section 5**

Euton explained that the project has been progressing well, and should be paved before the end of November. The only change they've made to the plan is adding a small retaining wall.

Other members of the board shared that they have already seen people using the unfinished trail.

Musser and Euton noted that several citizens have called to ask about the trail, and many were unaware it was being built at all.

### **Citizens' Initiative**

Euton reported that the initiative is slowly moving forward. There has been some spotty communication with volunteers, which has been hindering efforts. The deadline to file is mid-December, but would need to be done mid-November in order to be approved by City Council.

### **BTAC Update**

Euton noted that BTAC minutes would continue to be sent to the Board monthly via email. A brief discussion about incidences with malfunctioning traffic/pedestrian lights occurred. Tremante inquired about the planning of sections 4 and 8 of Big Walnut Trail. Euton stated that he wants to start planning both in the first quarter of 2016.

## **CORRESPONDENCE**

None.

## **DIRECTORS REPORT**

### **New Parks Superintendent**

Musser stated that the department hired Jeff Barr as the new Parks Superintendent. He is joining the department from the City of Columbus.

### **Hannah Park Community Garden**

Musser explained that the grand opening of the Hannah Park Community Garden would be opening on October 9, 2015. Abby Mauger spearheaded the project with her family, and equipment was donated from Home Depot and ADS.

**Property Acquisitions**

Euton stated that the VFW, St. Matthew's, Gahanna Woods (Foxwood), and Centerpoint Church land acquisitions are continuing to progress forward. The development of the St. Matthew's project depends on the dedicated park levy.

**Creekside Light Poles**

New LED light poles are being installed on the Creekside island, and will be taking the place of the lights mounted in the trees.

**Budget**

Euton stated that the budget process has changed because of the sustainable operating budget. The 2016 budget differs from 2015 in a few key areas. The department is bringing in a Recreational Supervisor to run the pools, and a Superintendent position to run the golf course. In addition, 10-12 FTE employees will be offered benefit packages because of the hours they worked this year. These budget changes will be proposed to Council in November.

**Danise Hall's Retirement**

Musser explained that Danise Hall, who has worked for the city for 33 years, will be retiring at the end of October. There will be a Parks & Recreation department get-together at Rusty Bucket on October 26, and a Senior Center open house celebration on October 27.

**Ohio Champions Soccer League**

After an inquiry from Franzmann regarding the Ohio Champions League, Euton explained that it is a Dublin-based league with over 100 teams. The tournament will be held on October 17-18 at Headley and McCorkle Park.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS****Aquatics Advisory Committee**

Nothing at this time.

**Bicycle & Trail Advisory Committee**

Piccolantonio explained that he was not at the latest meeting, but that the minutes were enclosed in the Board meeting packet.

**Implementation Team**

Nothing at this time.

**Natural Resources Advisory Committee**

Tremante explained that the Committee was planning to meet regarding some issues concerning the tree removal for BWT-5.

**Gahanna Parks & Recreation Foundation**

Miller shared the last meeting mostly focused on finances, including the outcome of Hops & Vines and Creekside Live. Hops & Vines made approximately \$20,000, which is about \$4,000 more than last year.

**Veteran's Memorial Committee**

Nothing at this time.

**School Board Report**

Nothing at this time.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business to come before the Board at this time, the meeting adjourned at 9:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mikala Back, Administrative Assistant

Approved this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2015

\_\_\_\_\_  
Eric Miller, Chair